

Special Column for Monday, April 16, 2007

I wanted to add this to last week's column about the foreclosures because of two recent demolitions that took place since Friday.

When the City began the foreclosure process, we did so on an aggressive schedule so that we could sell the properties to people as early into the construction/rehab season as we could. The flyer for the buildings was put together at the same time as the engineering and code enforcement departments visited each building to determine the structural integrity of each.

-222 Hill Street- This was found to be a structurally unsafe building, and the decision was made to demolish it. Several years ago we had a problem on Mann Avenue where we sold a building in better condition than 222 Hill Street in hopes that someone would be able to rehabilitate it. Subsequently, structural issues led to the new owner being forced to demolish his newly purchased building. We wanted to try and prevent that scenario from being repeated.

-319 8th Street- Several months ago we put out the bid to demolish this building due to a partial collapse in the rear of the building. We spent a good amount of time last year, and in the last week, trying to promote this building as an opportunity for someone to save.

Last year thirteen people visited the property during the open houses. Only one submitted a bid, and the City Council determined that the bid did not include enough money to rehabilitate it. Another bid was received late, which cannot legally be accepted.

After an unsuccessful effort to sell it and a partial collapse during the winter, our intention was to demolish this building. On March 14, I received a request from Beth Steckley of the Hillside Neighborhood to put the building back up for sale. Until Beth's email, no one had shown interest in the property since the last proposal was rejected. So we tried again, hoping some sort of interest would be sparked in the property. As you may have noticed, last week I spent time in a press release and column talking about it.

Before holding an Open House at the property we inspected the property once again and determined it was not safe for anyone to enter and the decision was made to proceed with demolition, despite the fact that we had promoted its sale. We did not want to see anyone get injured during an open house or have a new owner acquire a building that needed to be torn down.

It is unfortunate that it came to that, and the City lost another building. As usual the finger pointing has begun. It is easy for some to sit back and criticize our efforts but how many of the critics have stepped to the plate themselves? What have they done to prevent buildings from falling into disrepair or even buying one of these buildings when they had

the chance? Very few, if anyone, has led by example. On the other hand our continued efforts of strengthened Code Enforcement will hopefully avoid these situations in the future.

And just for the purpose of clarification, last year the City of Troy spent more than \$400,000 on restoring, stabilizing and rehabilitating buildings in our City. We spent only \$110,000 on demolitions, most of which came after numerous complaints from the neighbors in the area. 222 Hill Street is a great example of that.

Any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at 270-4401.

Harry J Tutunjian
Mayor of Troy